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Tues June 14th 1970

at the Nursing Home of the Sisters of
the Company of Mary
Sudbury Hill
Harrow on the Hill

Dear René

Postscript to ~~[illegible]~~ note just sealed as I have refound your letter accompanying photographs.

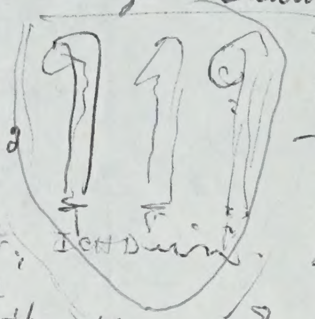
Yes, I see the inscriptions cover the entire surface of the whole small upper room. Yes, — those 'Irish' ᵹ's & ꝺ's, etc., are splendid forms — it's odd how later on, the Northumbrian Alcuin, by a fusion of Latin & Anglo-Irish forms created the clearest, most easy to read script of all, ~~&~~ & so under Charlemagne the model script. Jolly odd how these incredible number of art-forms (no matter what "art") react on each other & produce diversities of every sort, — some damned nice, some pretty beastly. Sometimes one can more or less see how the thing happened, but it's at best, more or less. One can, by a general principle, account for the 'pen-stroke' late Gothic in stone or those floriated 'legends' on tombs, shields, etc., because of the seemingly irresistible tendency to elaborate, & prance & curl & flourish — but there's lots more to it. What made the utilitarian chaps, who had to make redactions of the works of Antiquity or who wrote complex tractates of all sorts write in a more & more impossible 'Gothic' hand. In Missals & such-like it's usually possible to recognize ~~[illegible]~~ immediately only the words one knows but chaps who've worked to the actual text of, say, St Thomas, say one has to be a specialist in 13th Cent. script to follow it at all. And the abbreviations alone are a regular facer apart from the illegibility of the writing. Now this was not ~~a decadence~~ due to a decline in the Western Culture as a whole — for the

[redacted]

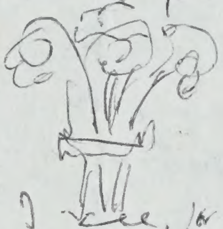
made things of the period of S. Thomas (born, I think, 1227) were aesthetically on the up grade within the Gothic setting.

.. & so one could go on.

I dont know when it was that makers of coat-armour & armorial bearings changed those three spaced feathers



worn as the cognizance of the King of Prague or ~~somewhere~~ & after his death at ~~[illegible]~~ Crecy, ICH DIEN, adopted ~~as~~ as the bearings ~~of~~ ~~of~~ those of the King of England's son as Earl of Chester & Prince of Wales, into that bunched-up



~~affair~~ badge worn by my R.W.F & still, I see, is the Official Royal College of Heralds badge of the Prince of Wales.

It is not that the later device could not possibly be made to work, but it so happens that I've seen somewhere a ~~medieval~~ medieval painted shield with the stiff, separated feathers, said to be of the ostrich feathers in signification, and it was so vastly more impressive than the bunched design that succeeded it. Though that's hardly fair, for it would apply to the lot: the vitality & feeling of a ~~[illegible]~~ piece of coat-armour painted in, maybe, an ~~miniature~~ illuminated MS of, say, the 12th or 13th cent. compared with the same bearings made in the late 15th or 16th centuries, let alone later still, is bloody marvellous. The difference, let us say, between ~~being~~ Edmund Spenser and his blasted red cross knight & the real thing (though only just in time) in Malory.

Did you know that as early as the Battle of Crecy, that bastard, the Black Prince, fought mainly, if not wholly, on foot and that by Henry V's time most of the slaughter of the French nobles was on foot.

Gradually, by the middle of the Two Roses War, techniques of armourers had made the use of the shield superfluous, or rather unmanageable. Every device was thought of, & skilled arrangement of rivetted plates (called, I think, 'Almayne pieces', (old Jerry always at it) which meant that ~~[illegible]~~ actually, in battle*, nobleman & any ordinary pikeman were soon locked in close mortal combat – with various forms of pikes, ~~[illegible]~~ murderous poleaxes, 'glaives' (can't spell it.) swords & daggers – ~~a~~ a real 'in-fighting' of ~~tank~~ ~~tank like~~ tank-like figures – all packed in a close ~~space~~ space – that's what made Towton, from dawn to dusk on Palm Sunday, 14(?) in driving sleet & hail, so terrible an affair, & the casualties so large.

Talking of shields, reminds me. From your knowledge of Old Irish & ~~Irish~~ historic battles, you will know ~~that~~ they talk of clouds of white lime-wash as shield met shield. Do you take it that they painted their shields white, as they did their houses etc. Only the other day, just before I got ill, I found in a poem a reference ~~to~~ about a Welsh hero ~~poem~~ to the streaks of lime for his shield. – The ~~[illegible]~~ poem was not, I think, a very early Welsh poem – about 12th Cent. I think, & I wondered whether some peoples of the Celtic tradition used lime wash on their shields, just as they certainly used it freely on their dwellings & forts ~~&~~ & wattled churches.

So glad you are learning Old Irish – I bet it's no easy task. Though with your great ability at languages I felt you'd master it. It is, as you know, my great grief that I can't master Welsh – a kind of abiding shame. This memory thing you speak of, – Yes, it's awful, and now I'm seventy-four I know I can't ~~over~~ overcome it. About seven years ago I did get by memory the the differing parts

* In tournaments of course, special jousting shields were developed & all kinds of special bits of armour such as 'pauldron-plates' to protect the right ~~[illegible]~~ arm & shoulder & more & more elaborate head-pieces with crests to show clearly who was the wearer – just what you didn't want in a battle – where anonymity was always seen to be usual.

At least no books or reference of any sort, but on a frontage of a couple of miles, I think less, is that, the massed forces of York were said to have been about 40,000 & those of Lancaster about 60,000 or more ~~[illegible]~~ so that in depth the concentration including ~~transport~~, baggage, etc. etc. must have been very extensive. For some reason I've always been interested in Towton. For sometime before I had this blasted breakage & stroke thing I wrote a thing about it in relation to the mixed forces on each of the Welsh March. There was no point in it, but then I've wasted a hell of a lot of time, paper, ink in talking of things that have no particular point.

I thought it interesting that Shakespeare did not even mention that the great tussle was on a Palm Sunday (so quickly had the feasts of the church lost associations in men's minds & I can't see Henry VI sitting on a

(wait:)
molehill / to consider the futility & tragedy of the war, in a freezing wind, the force of which ~~[illegible]~~ drove the well directed barrage of Yorkist arrows, and caused the Lancastrians in the ~~st~~ strong position to break rank

Turn over

of the Welsh verb bod 'to-be' like Latin esse etc. — & for about three weeks I, more or less, got it fixed, ~~but~~ within another six months or so, it had all gone. In Welsh, as in Latin, the pronoun goes with part of the verb. & I suppose that's so in Irish.

In Irish does the adjective normally follow the substantive? That's the normal rule in Welsh, but, of course, the 'rule' is broken sometimes, not exactly ~~[illegible]~~ it. just when you any ~~[illegible]~~ When the ~~ad~~ qualifying adjective does come before the substantive, then the initial letters of the latter are mutated, in ~~[illegible]~~ various ways. thus ~~[illegible]~~ Virgo Maria, is Mair ~~[illegible]~~ Morwyn but, with the adjective first then it's ~~Morwyn~~ Fair. Thus the thousands of place-names beginning "Llanfair" mean only ~~[illegible]~~ 'Mary's Enclosure' or ~~Mary's~~ bit of land. and the word llan (land) more & more meant ~~enclosed land~~ land enclosed by some community of Xtian men, most Welshmen will tell you but that llan means 'church.' though they know perfectly well that eglwys fr. ecclesia means church. Well, you know all that, what I would ask is: at what sort of epoch did the Old inflected language of Goidelic Celtic, ~~slowly~~ lose its end inflections of nouns (as in Latin). In the case of Welsh we know that by round about 550 — 600 A.D. the complex inflections (very like Latin) had broken down bringing to birth an 'Early' or 'Proto-Welsh'. ~~And~~ that again sometime between the ninth & the 12th Cents A.D. the accent changed in some way.

Well, not so very different as the 'French' of ye Chanson de Roland & the French of, say, Villon, & since. But the 6th Cent A.D. change ~~was~~ produced a virtually new language

Welsh, Cornish, Breton, stand in relation to that
parent language just as French or Spanish stand to
Vulgar or Late Latin. In Britain things went
differently, Latin was the official tongue, and would be
living cultivated by the upper-class Romano-Britons
but the native Brittonic tongue remained side by side
the Roman tongue & when the provinces of Britannia
after four centuries of ~~civilization~~ ~~Roman~~ Roman
rule — as long as from us back to Elizabeth I
the various tribal areas, asserted independent rule.
their language ~~[illegible]~~ was already some form
of 'Early Welsh' — not a 'Romance' speech as
would have been the case had one might
have expected — and as it was in Gaul. But
the church was well established and that
meant a continuity of the works of Classical
Antiquity — especially in some areas. No one
could have been more hot on romanitas
~~[illegible]~~ with Xtianus ~~that~~ Padraig or Gildas.
But what I meant to ~~[illegible]~~ is rather as when
Old Irish lost ~~the~~ ~~[illegible]~~ regular celtic inflexions
& became gradually an analytic language like
Welsh or French or what you will. —
Rum business, this ~~develo~~ development
from a logical, ordered, synthetic, spoken form
when the declensional endings showed in
meaning & all these confounded 'for,'
'from,' 'to,' etc were unnecessary.
Yet I'm told it happens & is
happening in languages in Africa
Asia etc — must stop now

Love to Joan

So poor Tiger Dawson has gone
after all these years of suffering
what a bloke! & what a lot
of [illegible] — Requiescat in pace

love

Dai

(over)

I suppose we are seeing in truer perspective the repeated assertion that the long-bow – English archery etc reversed the whole triumphal role of armed horse that had prevailed for hundreds of years. It all depended on circumstances & how the commanders deployed their forces. Obviously, well mailed & armed men-at-arms or 'knights' well mounted could pretty easily account for unarmoured spearmen. There is extant MS evidence of how Welsh-border troops stuck the butts of their long spears in the ground & formed ovals or squares, hedgehog fashion to withstand Anglo-Norman attacks of horse, like the later Scottish 'Skiltrons', but ~~[illegible]~~ one of the Norman leaders saw that if archers would bring down ~~[illegible]~~ a barrage of arrows on the circles of spearmen followed by the charge of heavy horse, then the defence would almost always break. This is known to have been employed later in the Scots wars & also I think by Ed II, at Boroughbridge. It is known to have been used by the Welsh in a rebellion subsequent to the Edwardian conquest of Gwynedd, – I think without success. But it always depended on the skilled co-ordination of heavy armoured horse & projectile weapons of some sort ~~[illegible]~~. I understand that even at Bannockburn, ~~had~~ had the English been able to protect their archers from a small force of Bruce's light horse, they might have come off not so badly, but ~~they were~~ there were no English forces to ~~protect~~ the archers on the flank at the crucial moment, ~~[illegible]~~ at least, that's one theory. Perhaps only an excuse for getting beaten – don't know. But obviously, this generally accepted superiority of 'horse' over 'foot' for centuries & centuries, is, even when true, subject to endless qualifications of one sort or another, above all the tactical use of trained horsemen in ~~[illegible]~~ coordination with bodies of archers themselves protected by sufficient men-at-arms to save them from any ~~[illegible]~~ direct contact with charging bodies of mailed horse.

At Bannockburn, the initial ~~charg~~ charge of the Scots' foremost body — don't know the composition, but *apparently* mounted & un-mounted men-at-arms & knights was carried by its own impetus and forced the central English command to give ground, a bit — archers from either flank ~~or~~ of either ~~[illegible]~~ army would not do so very much once the close-confused armoured men & horses were intermeddled, but Bruce's archers scattered on the higher ground were, able to infiltrate gaps & kill or capture some entangled in this 'first wave' — the second Scottish command seem to have got it badly, because they were, so far, compact bodies horsemen anxious to re-inforce & aid their first line which had already dented the English front in the centre — but their advance made matters ~~[illegible]~~ more confused, & as they formed were a ~~[illegible]~~ perfect target for Scottish archers ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ in the difficult ground on ~~[illegible]~~ the left & right. But heaven knows what actually happened — may have been some quite other twist of fortune. But at least we can say that it's the co-ordination of two separate 'arms' that brings victory or disaster — whether in 'the pristine wars of the Romans' or in a skirmish on the Welsh border or with tanks & infantry in Montgomery's North ~~Africa~~ Africa.

Did I tell you, (I think I did) of the young man who wrote to me last November, who'd chanced to hear Douglas C: [illegible] radio version of *In Parenthesis*, then bought the paper-back & then decided to take a holiday of four days ~~f~~ for it & visit Mametz Wood & district. He went by ship to ~~[illegible]~~ France then by train to Albert or some such & then walked to Fricourt & so on a mile or two into Mametz Wood & sent me some of the photographs he'd taken (Oct. 1969). The result astounded me — for it looked almost exactly the same as it had when I last saw it in July 1916. The exterior shape appeared identical & the interior 'rides' as described in *I. P.* easily recognizable — less thickly tangled with undergrowth — and of course the new ~~[illegible]~~ saplings (now 60 years old) were not the same saplings, but *looked* in photographs just the same. What did look different was the actual ground — I mean nearly all the white chalk marks had been grown over so that, e.g. the Queen's Nullah, & what

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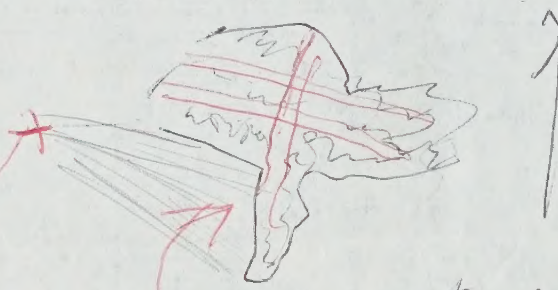
deep white chalk ~~inclined~~ incline where I stood to hear 'Well Bell, and with it they slide", etc in Part VII, is now all grass-grown & a windy bank, & much more shallow. I saw more clearly our exact bit of Bde frontage & the run of the Jerry trench which was our first objective. In *In Paren* I refer to an entrenchment called on our maps '~~[illegible]~~ Strip Trench', but was not absolutely certain how it ran. But this young man with his snapshots & a map or two, but mainly to my references in *In Paren*, he carefully & with great ingenuity, I thought, the different points referred to.

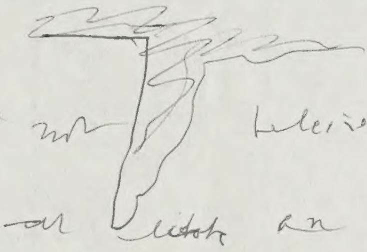


It would seem that my Bde, the 113th was given the job of capturing the left hand, ~~or~~ south-western part of the wood while other brigades of the 38th (Welsh) Division, ~~[illegible]~~ mostly S. W. Borderers & others, were to attack the more ~~easterly~~ south-eastern parts. Very roughly the wood runs on undulating chalk ground a mile or perhaps a mile ~~[illegible]~~ two miles wide with ~~[illegible]~~ one central ride more or less from north to south and two in ~~[illegible]~~ east to west as marked in red ~~[illegible]~~ (the proportions are all wrong) and my battalion attacked on the left hand side of that open edge of the wood. Somewhere about where I've marked X there was a detached & ~~very~~ small copse, 'Acid Drop Copse' that Jerry strongly held with machine guns. It will be seen that it was an ideal position for which to sweep any ~~[illegible]~~ troops striving to advance over the open ground that side of wood. It turns out that the 16th (or 14th) R.W.F (not sure which) suffered terribly severe losses in an initial attack on that left flank of the wood, and that my battalion were called upon ~~to~~ reinforce the remainder & so entered the wood on the left side ~~intermingled~~ intermingled with men of ~~this~~ other battalions. It might be said well, why did not advance artillery parties knock out Acid Drop Copse, Well for one thing it was so small, sitting a

⑨

a few trees — I, personally, never saw it for smoke & stuff but the word passed along 'He's got a machine-gun in Acid Drop Copse* somewhere away there on the left' but as the main fire was coming from the wood direct in front & also from ~~that~~ on the right, one guess was as good as another. Our first objective was the lateral ride ~~a~~ but was reached fairly early ~~on~~ & we joined up more or less with the other battalions of the Division whose attack had been from the right.

*called 'Acid Copse' in In Parens so as not to tie it down to one particular action.

Could you see a photo taken at the end of 1916 of that  south-west bit of the wood you would not believe it possible but by 1969 it would all look an almost unscathed, perhaps quite neat bit of woodland.

All the photos look much flatter & wider spread than the place actually ~~is~~ is. Why do photographs usually do that? The Ditchling downs in photographs hardly register at all & even the steeps of Capel-y-ffin give no sense of their ~~[illegible]~~ rise & fall in photography.

To return to your inscriptions for Homer — what's the surface? Can't see any lines of whitewashed brick running through — In the photograph of the in the some 2 say recess, the bit with 'from plummet sweep of falcon' in it the unity seems particularly held — How you manage it without continuous readjustment & alteration I just don't know. I think, here & there, a subtle thinning out might add to the life of the forms — but can't really say unless I saw the holy originals — There is this alarming thing about 'letters' that the ~~[illegible]~~ juxtaposition of the forms between the forms of the letters are of equal importance.

No, too difficult to talk about.

Much love, ~~God~~ bless you. I would write more sensibly if I had not this almost ~~[illegible]~~ continuous exhaustion — blast it

David

⑨

(See over)

This bit ~~here~~ w
seems to be separate
D.

sorry for this pointless meander. But it struck me as extraordinary that a young man born I suppose about the time of my writing *In Parenthesis* should have found so much to check-up.

Or that the shape, etc, of little woodlands had regrown almost exactly as they had been in 1916. For even when I saw it last it was smashed & torn to pieces by shell fire.

One amazing thing. He was taking a photograph on the strip-fresh corner the wood & looked down and saw the remains of a very rusty shell case.

Another thing that interested me was that in the Official History of War I, Western Front, — which my friend had read, ~~Mametz is referred to~~ Mametz Wood is referred to and that after consultation on the afternoon of the July 11th between Div. & Bde staffs it was decided to withdraw the Division from that sector, as, though the wood was then taken, the troops were considered to be in a most exhausted condition, largely by *serious* lack of water. This interested me only because among my immediate acquaintances 'thirst' was most felt. But it did not occur to us that ~~the~~ whole Division was in serious need of water, but only that one was bloody thirsty and when parties were sent with a few bottles to get water there was the danger of one's waterbottle being punctured by a stray or, just simply pinched, if full.

I have no idea why the water-supply organization should have, on this occasion, broken down or proved tricky. For, speaking generally, on the West Front, the maintenance of ~~water was~~ & distribution of water was well run.

The bloke who sent me the photographs was surprised that my memory was such that a decade & more after the war I should be accurate about that bloody water. — whereas, of course, all I remembered was that my immediate mates & I were very thirsty.

14/6/70

Mametz wood etc
as it is now (Acid
drop copse etc)
pp 7ff,

Colin H